



THE

# KNIGHT



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## BALTIC NUMISMATIST ALEKSANDRS PLATBARZDIS, 1899-1975

Translated by Tyge Sondergaard

In Lithuanian numismatics, it is impossible to study our hobby without encountering the books and writings of the numismatist Aleksandrs Platbarzdis, whose works are often used and quoted in research. The year 1995 marks the 20th anniversary of his death, and in memory of this great Baltic researcher, LNA member Tyge Sondergaard of Denmark has translated for us from the Swedish language some important biographical information about him.

The two articles were obituaries written in memory of Platbarzdis in 1975. One was written by Lars O. Lagerqvist, and appeared in Skandinavisk Numismatik No. 8. The other was written by the late Ernst Nathorst-Böös, and appeared front cover in the December 1975 (No. 10) issue of the Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad, which Platbarzdis wrote articles for. LNA member Tyge Sondergaard has edited and condensed these articles into the following discourse:

Aleksandrs Platbarzdis of Stockholm, was born in 1899 in Latvia September 1, 1899. He died on August 1, 1975 there in Sweden. With a diploma from the Polytechnical Institute in Riga, Platbarzdis practiced at the paint factory "Wilhelm Hjordi" in Riga as a sectional engineer. He was subsequently promoted to the post of managing director of the firm.

In 1944 he and his wife fled over the Baltic Sea and landed as refugees in Sweden. Tragically, his wife died a short time afterwards.

In his Latvian homeland, he had been an eager numismatist and philatelist, and in his modest luggage during his flight to freedom was included his excellent collection of banknotes and stamps, both first and foremost from the Baltic countries. These collections he improved upon through his lifetime.

His hobby soon became his main employment, as he was attached to the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm as a member of the archival staff very shortly after landing in Sweden.

At first (while still improving his new language) he was occupied with putting in order the Russian and baltic coin and note collections. While doing this, he very soon acquainted himself with the Swedish material, which at that time was rather overlooked by numismatists and historians who were doing economic studies.

Under the management of Nils Ludvig Rasmusson, Platbarzdis learned to do research as his assistant, and later took over the responsibility. Without being afraid of the enormous job waiting for him, Platbarzdis went into that "jungle" which at that time consisted of the Museum's collection of private Swedish banknotes.

He went through and put in order the Museum's extensive collection of notes from everywhere. His getting ahold of this task led the Royal Coin Cabinet through the foreign service departments to collect all recent means of payment, wherever Sweden was represented.

His great knowledge of the numismatic history of the Baltic countries was of great help to him here, and as early as 1947 he published (inspired by Rasmusson) an important article on the making of the Swedish so-called coin-notes of 1716-17, in Nordisk Numismatisk Arsskrift, 1947, pp. 57-65. This was his first work in his adopted country, and it soon was followed by many others.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2...]



### M.K. ČIURLIONIS HONORED ON 50 LITŲ COMMEMORATIVE COIN

Lithuanian artist and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis (1875-1911) has been honored on the 120th anniversary of his birth by a commemorative 50 Litu issued by the Bank of Lithuania. Dated 1995, the non-circulating legal tender coin was issued on September 19.



[Continued on page 9.]



# BALTIC NUMISMATIST ALEKSANDRS PLATBARZDIS, 1899-1975

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.....]

The results of his work and his other research were shown in his three surveying descriptions of the Swedish notes and their history; in his volume about the history of the "Stockholms Banco," in his original and updated versions of the coins and banknotes of the Baltic States in modern times; and his weighty and utmost detailed history about the mint in Livonia under Swedish rule there.

In 1956 he became a corresponding member of the Swedish Numismatic Society. His interest for the Baltic means of payment never left him, and in leisure hours he worked on a big history and catalogue about the coins and notes of these countries during their years of independence in the inter-war period. It was a work he himself with utmost difficulties edited, and finally published in 1953.

It came out in more editions, gradually as well illustrated as also printed. The latest one came in the English language published by the "Numismatisk Bogforlag" in Stockholm in 1968.

He wrote a good deal more about these subjects in the form of articles in the Nordic Numismatic Unions Member Magazine. A great study on the so-called "Judenitjs Notes" printed in Stockholm was published in the Nordic Numismatic Yearbook in 1959.

Here it must be mentioned, that it is still very difficult for collectors of Baltic coins and banknotes to do without Platbarzdis' book. It is "second to none" where you for all intents and purposes can find what you are looking for.

As time went on, Platbarzdis carried on his research in the Swedish note history, including two major works on Swedish banknotes published in 1960 and 1963.

His last scientific work (published by the Royal Fictional, History, and Antiquity Academy) dealt with the Swedish Mint in Riga through the years 1621-1710 and was published in 1968. He was made a corresponding member of that society in 1969.

It should be noted that reduced eyesight in his last years hindered his collecting, further research and writing.

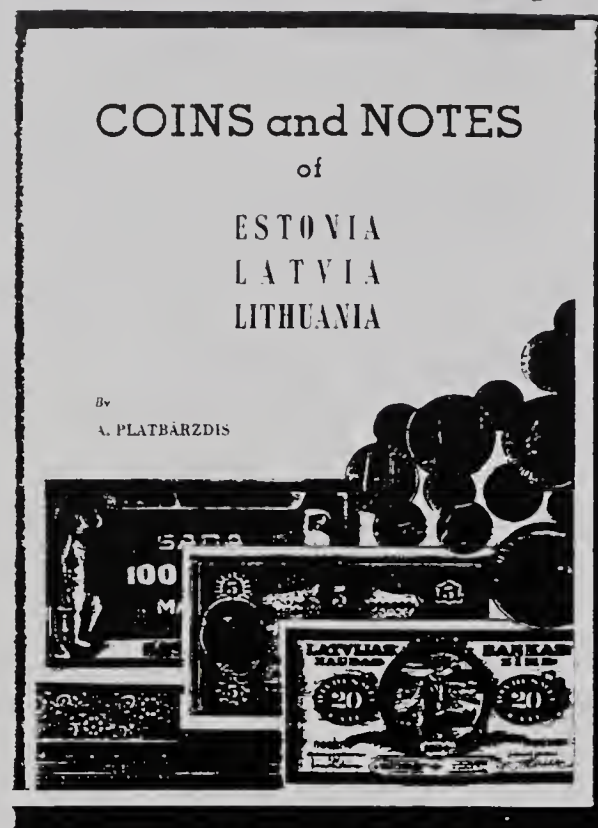
One thing for sure, his works were of a pioneer nature, not written about before. Aleksandrs Platbarzdis was not a commonplace person. With an enthusiasm that often could border on obstinacy, he presented his theories and fought for his researches. His Baltic character had a strong exotic intensity. He willingly shared his research/knowledge with others who were interested.

It is extremely gratifying, that his great collection of Baltic & Russian banknotes some years before his death went to the big collection of notes in the Royal Cabinet, as it was acquired therefore by means from the State and the Sven Svensons Foundation. The Royal collection is now thought to be the most complete and finest in the world concerning Baltic coins and notes.

Besides that, another less known collection of his exists. It was procured in the 1960s from the Bank-Museum by a private institution and now it forms part of the collections in the Royal Coin Cabinet. Here Platbarzdis in an inspiring way has formed the collection in a quite new and pioneering way. Here he asked a series of questions and answered them by displaying the collection according to those questions.

Lars O. Lagerqvist writes, "My first meeting with Mr. Platbarzdis took place in the autumn of 1951, when I started my employment at the Royal Coin Cabinet. We both worked for nearly two years in the magazine/archives and I very soon learned to appreciate his helpfulness against a beginner (one of my tasks was to put in order the foreign banknote collection), and to admire his working capacity.

With staying power, yes willfulness, he carried on his research and never let a subject suited for a reference book, pass by. The discussions could be rather lively, when it was about the interpretation of a document or about the result of a detail in the research. He has now left us after a splendid life work. We as a grateful audience, are remembering him with admiration."



Ernst Nathorst-Böös writes: "He confidentially could go to his rest after a long working day, full of scholarship, knowing that his name for all future is alive in Swedish numismatics."

The Director of the Royal Swedish Coin Cabinet, Mrs. Brita Malmer (1972) in the Scandinavian Numismatic Journal page 222 tells briefly about the collection of Mr. Aleksandrs Platbarzdis acquired in 1971:

"The main part of the growth of the Cabinet during 1971 consists of a collection of Baltic means of payment. This numbers 164 coins and 2811 notes, mainly from the time 1915-1961. The collection is through decades of collecting by the former assistant of the Museum, Aleksandrs Platbarzdis (formerly occupied in Riga).

The Coin Cabinet previously has had an exceptional position what concerns Baltic coins from early times. A part of that material is shown in the permanent exhibition from earlier Swedish dependencies.

Thanks to the purchase of the Platbarzdis collection, Sweden is now that country, which can show the most comprehensive collection of Baltic means of payments (in public possession) from the 16th century and up till today.

The collection was bought through contributions from the Department of Education, the Academy of "Belle Arts" and from the Foundation of Sven Svenson.

As an example of the partly very interesting material of notes, can be mentioned the Lithuanian 1938 10 Litu PAVYZDYS proof, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the birth of the Lithuanian State [Pick-28], as told about in the 1955 article published in the NNUM."



FEATURE OF THE MONTH. By Frank Passic, Albion, Michigan.

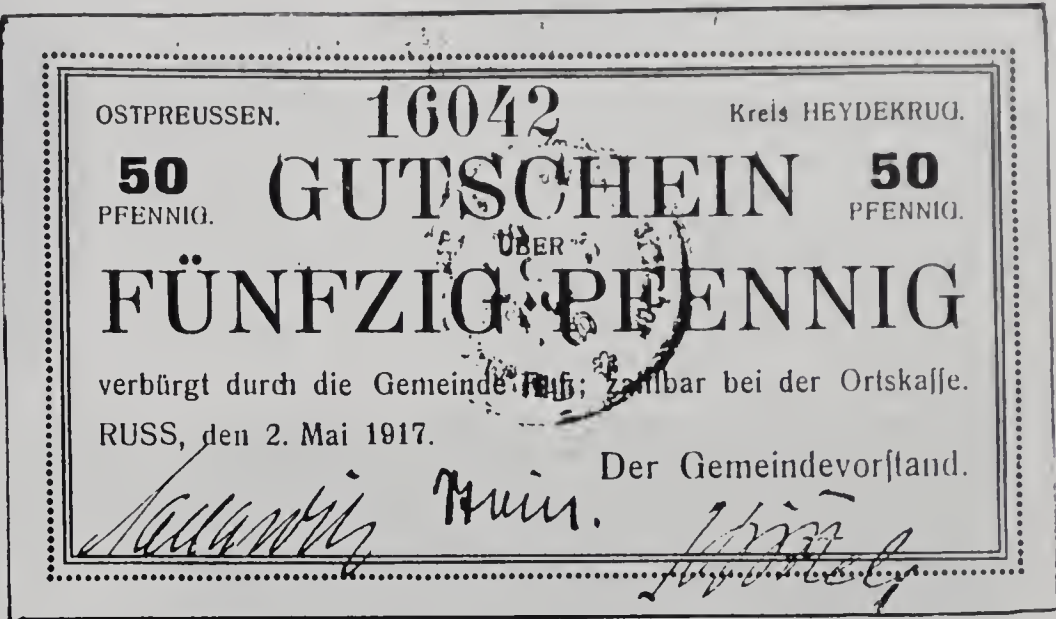
# RUSNĖ 50 PFENNIG NOTE, 1917.

50 PFENNIG  
 Date: May 2, 1917  
 City: Rusnė (Russ), Lithuania  
 Size: 127 x 75 mm.

During World War I, several Lithuanian towns had issued for them local municipal money by the various occupiers. For example, Sėda, Panevėžys, Vilnius, and Šilutė. This month we are featuring a note issued from Rusnė, located in the delta of the Nemunas River in the former Klaipėda Territory, just inside the present Lithuanian border across from former E. Prussia.

Rusnė is a community of 2500 persons located southwest of Šilutė, situated on an island on the left bank of the Atmana River. It was founded in the 15th century as a fishing village, and was annexed to Lithuania in 1923 together with with rest of the Klaipėda Territory.

"Since ancient times the inhabitants made their living by fishing. The town was an imporant point on the lumber export route from Lithuania to the Baltic Sea."



according to the **Encyclopedia Lituanica**. "Logs were retied at Rusnė for easier maneuverability through the Courish Lagoon to the port of Klaipėda. Some of the lumber was processed at Rusnė itself, which had 6 sawmills. All of the major lumber companies of Klaipėda maintained their representatives at Rusnė."

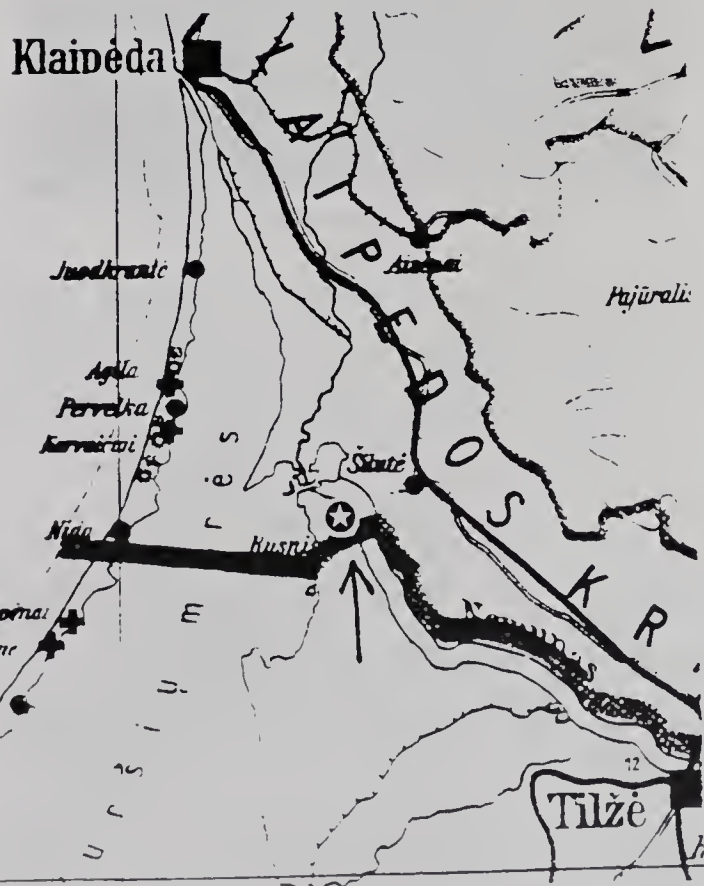
"Rusnė was a township center with several banks, a customhouse, and a border police school. In 1913-14 a bridge was built across the Atmata River. It was partly destroyed during World War II. The Russians demolished it completely, leaving the town accessible only by ferry."

Rusnė was part of the district of Šilutė, and issued municipal notes in the denomination of 50 pfennigs, dated May 2, 1917, and July 1, 1920. This month we are featuring the first note, which is tan in color. In the center is found a round rubber-stamped purple seal, with the name of the city "RUSS" in the center of the seal's text.

The text translates, "East Prussian 50 Pfennigs. Heydekrug District. 50 Pfennigs. Fifty Pfennig Note. Guaranteed by the Municipality of Rusnė, Payable at the local treasury. The local board." At the bottom are found three signatures of local officials. On the top is found the 5-digit serial number. The note is uniface, that is, nothing is printed on the back.

The background security printing consists of 4 mm. squares with a circle in the center. A border of dots surrounds a double-lined border.

This 50 pfennig Rusnė note is one of the relatively overlooked pieces of currency by collectors, that was issued by a city that is within the present-day borders of Lithuania.



**AT LEFT:** We've placed a star showing the location of Rusnė, halfway between Klaipėda and Tilžė, to the left of Šilutė. The dark line below is the E. Prussian border.



# 4. THE BANK OF LITHUANIA: A GLANCE INTO THE PAST.

By Arunas Daugis

(Originally published in **Respublika**, 10 June 1995, page 7.)

In the early part of March, one of the most important state institutions celebrated a 5-year anniversary. On March 1, 1990, the Bank of Lithuania was re-established.

A bit of history. On August 9, 1922, the Founding Seimas adopted a currency statute. The litas became the unit of Lithuanian currency, which according to law contained 0.150462 grams of pure gold. Two days later the statute was passed creating the Bank of Lithuania, whose main task was to place the litas into circulation, to insure its stability, to regulate the circulation of the currency, and to manage a functioning monetary system.



On September 28 of the same year, the President of the Republic appointed professor V. Jurgutis as the first Director of the Bank of Lithuania. Previously, V. Jurgutis was the Foreign Minister and he continued to remain in that post until resigning on August 6, 1929.

Within a month of the signing of the Bank of Lithuanian statute, on September 27, 1922, an organizational meeting of the shareholders was held during which it was decided that the bank would be founded with a capital of 12 million litai. The organizational structure of the bank was determined. 202 shareholders participated in the meeting. The majority of the shares were held by the Lithuanian government, which had already managed to obtain a number of private Lithuanian banks. After the signing of the 1920 Lithuanian-Russian peace treaty, 3 million gold rubles were delivered to Lithuania which made up the financial basis of the Bank of Lithuania and was the first and main gold deposit of the bank.

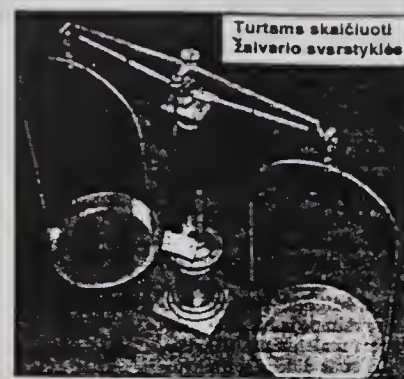
On October 2, 1922, the Bank of Lithuania began its operations with 5 workers (the re-established Bank of Lithuania began its operations with the same number of workers in 1990). The Bank of Lithuania began its work in Kaunas, the temporary capital of Lithuania. By the end of 1922, more than 100 workers worked for the bank. The bank expanded very rapidly in 1923. In that year, the bank of Lithuania began opening up branch banks in the districts and the number of employees more than doubled. The Bank of Lithuania was charged with issuing the litas. However, the first provisional notes dated September 10, 1922, that is, they were issued before the bank officially opened.

Even with the establishment of the Bank of Lithuania, the issue of facilities [bank buildings] arises. In the temporary capital Kaunas, even up to the First World War, a defense oriented statute was in effect which limited the size that buildings could be constructed. Thus there were fewer buildings in Kaunas, as opposed to Vilnius, that were suited for the Bank of Lithuania.

Not only that, right after the war, there was a housing shortage in the whole country. When the government would not permit the occupation of the former Russian State Bank building in Kaunas, a decision was made to construct our own building. The architectural petition announced in 1924 was won by a Parisian



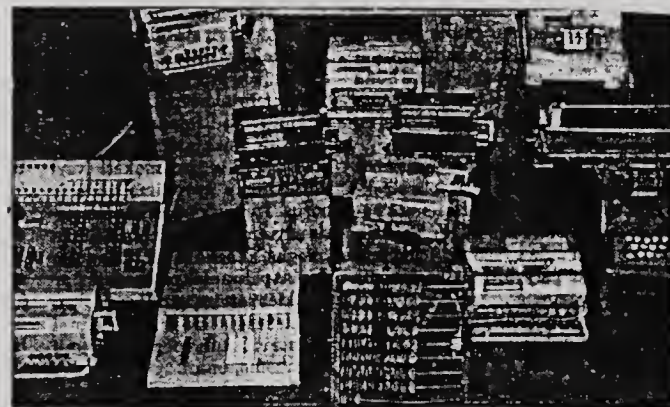
**VLADAS JURGUTIS: Priest, Professor, Founder of the Bank of Lithuania and its First Director.**



**Brass Balances for Weighing Precious Metals and Stones.**



**Pre-war Litai**



**Early "Computers" of the Bank of Lithuania.**

architect of Lithuanian lineage. The proposal specified that besides the facilities necessary for the functioning of the bank and the safes, there would also be apartments for 11 lower echelon officials and 6 garages. The construction took three years. Currently, the building houses the Kaunas Branch of the Bank of Lithuania, and the Kaunas Branch of the Farmer's [Ūkio] Bank.

The current Bank of Lithuania building is in the center of Vilnius, 6 Gediminas Prospect, right next to the Academic Drama Theater. The building was originally constructed specifically to be a bank. Currently, the building is a registered architectural landmark.

During the 1890s, a group of influential Russian financiers and entrepreneurs formed the Vilnius Agricultural Bank [Vilniaus Žemės Bankas]. They purchased two wooden structures from a resident of Vilnius on a street named at that time St. George's Prospect. A competition was announced for the design of the new building. The bank moved into the new concrete



two-story building in 1891. In the beginning of this century and before the first World War, the building was modified and additions were made. However, the basic structural composition and architectural design was preserved and can be seen even today.

From the end of the Second World War to 1990, it housed the Lithuanian Branch of the Soviet State Bank.

**The Museum of the Bank of Lithuania.** If we assume that the purpose of museums is to pay tribute to history, the Museum of the Bank of Lithuania on 6 Gediminas Prospect does just that. The museum, which is only known to a few, only those who deal with the nation's central bank, presents the history of Lithuanian banking as well as the history of the Bank of Lithuania. The idea to start such a museum was forwarded in 1986 by the Director of the Lithuanian Branch of the Soviet State Bank, Z. Žilevičius.

Times changed, and the displays changed. Currently, most of the display spaces at the Bank of Lithuania Museum is devoted to Lithuania between the wars. The most neglected period is the 1945-1990 period. Space was found to reopen a display on the history of the Bank of Lithuania. According to the memory of the museum's curator Ms. G. Leonavičiūtė, who has been working for the bank since 1948 and for the museum since its inception, the displays were fundamentally changed during the tenure of V. Baldišis.

The museum also houses the first money counting machine used between the wars, and other banking items as well as the chair that the Director of the Bank used. The chair was also used by the Branch Director during the Soviet era. The last person to use it was the Director of the re-established Bank of Lithuania, V. Baldišis.

Most of the museum's exhibits consist of photographs and money collections, and not only Lithuanian. "The history of the Bank is of interest only to bankers. The money collections on display will not impress numismatists," says G. Leonavičiūtė. There are rare items. For example, a rare 1938 PAVYZDYS commemorative 10 Litu note that was to be issued to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the re-establishment of the country's independence. It depicted a group of signers of the Declaration of Independence. There was not enough time to issue this note. The Bank of Lithuania was able to obtain this sample note for 5,000 litai [U.S. \$1,250]. According to G. Leonavičiūtė, the museum is visited by students studying finance as well as high school tour groups. She suggests that all visitors to the Bank visit the museum.

Often antique collectors visit the museum hoping to sell sometime at a good profit. Visitors can reserve passes in advance by phone at the Bank of Lithuania. Of all the directors of the former and the currently re-established Bank of Lithuania, Ms. G. Leonavičiūtė considers Romualdas Visokavičius as having most enthusiastically supported the expansion of the museum. According to her, R. Visokavičius was very concerned about this matter and was most instrumental in renewing the exposition.

Congratulations to LNA member Vincent W. Alones on being awarded a Medal of Merit by the American Numismatic Association at the ANA's 104th Anniversary Convention in Anaheim California last summer. Alones also took second place with his display, "The Campaign Medal of Central Lithuania" at the event.

An article entitled, "Currency Reform in the Baltic States" by Becky Winkelman appeared in the October 1995 issue of **The Numismatist**, pp. 1227-1231, 1267-1269. The article focuses on the switch from the Soviet economy to a free market, and currency reforms in each Baltic country. Many of the references for the article were taken from the **Baltic Independent** newspaper.

We have received a couple of requests for the address of the Russian Numismatic Society. It is: P.O. Box 1586, Bellingham, Washington. 98227.

The Lithuanian Collector's Association in Vilnius has issued a special commemorative medal honoring the 50th birthday of its president, E. Armoška. This medal was



struck at the Lithuanian Mint. It was designed by artist Petras Garška who works there at the mint. The medal measures 37 mm. in diameter, and was struck in proof silver. About 30 pieces were minted. It comes housed in a hard plastic holder and green cardboard box, the same as Lithuania's commemorative 10 Litu coins!

A special thanks to Algirdas Kepalas who is helping us out with a backlog of translative work to assist our LNA translator and director Aleksandras Radžius. If you would like to help us out translating Lithuanian to English, please write this editor.

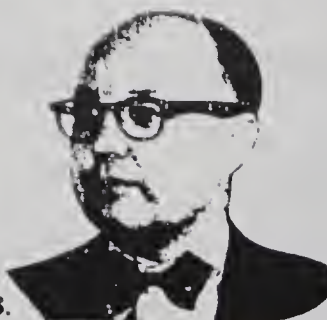
Please note our new LNA address: P.O. Box 22696, Baltimore, Maryland. 21203.



# 6. LITHUANIAN NUMISMATIC DICTIONARY

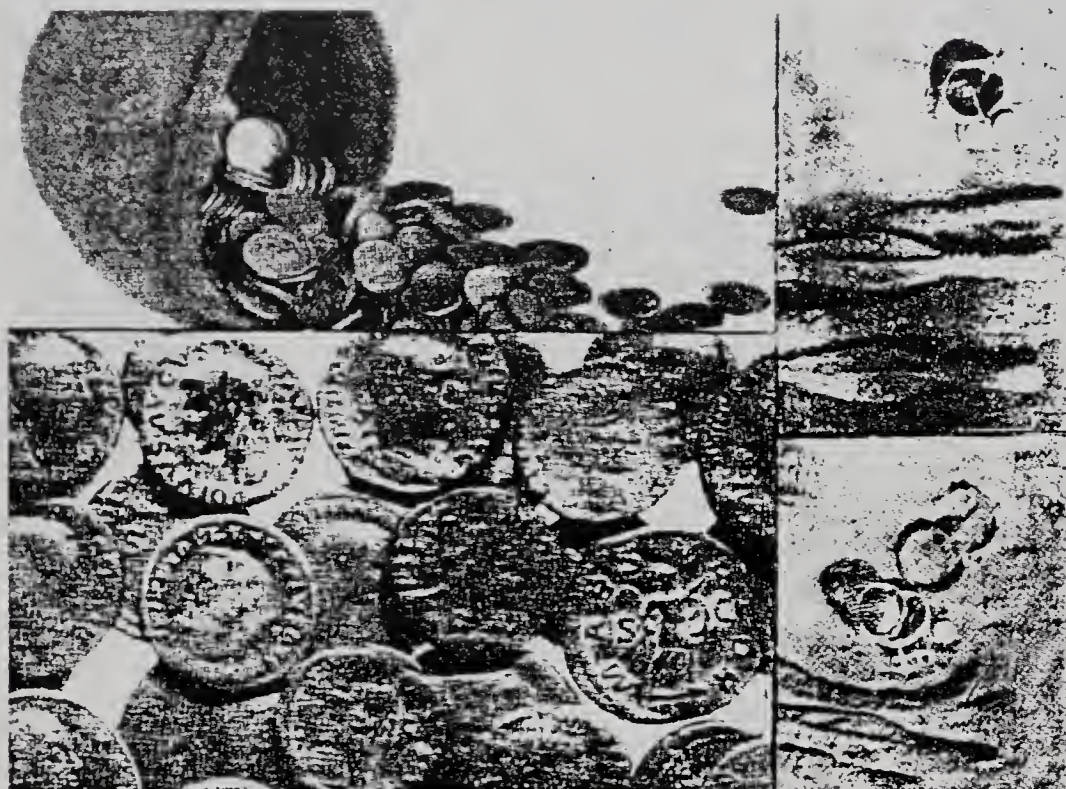
By  
Jonas K. Karys

28.



English translation by  
V.L.G. Matelis

Continued from last issue....



Stambus ir mažesni "pinigu lobiai".

**L'UDORAS** Louise D'or. A golden coin of the French in the 17-18th centuries. Originally struck (on the model of the Spanish pistola) by Louis 13th in 1641, and retained in France up until the Revolution. Its place was assumed in 1805 by the "Napoleon." At the start, the Louis d'or contained about 7.3 gr. of gold. In time, it became smaller, but its value, from the original 10 livras, increased to 25.

**L'UTAS** Lute. (German lot) A small measure of weight for precious metals among the Germans, originally, 1 24th of a Roman pound (in the metric system about 13.646 gr.). With the Koeln mark predominating in central Europe, the Lute made up 1 16 of its pound, and the latest (19th century) German pound was divided into 30 lutes. With the basic units of weight changing, the weight of the lute also changed. In addition to its weight functions, the lute served as a measure to indicate the fineness of silver and of silver coins. For example, the silver mark of pure metal weighed 16 lutes, and so was also 16 lutes fineness, while a silver coin or other article of 15 lutes, had 1 16 ligature, that is, it was produced of 15 16 fineness and not of pure silver. If 112 lutes, then it was 12 16 fineness, etc. This measure of fineness was abbreviated otherwise: the numerator of the fraction was changed into Roman or other figures, and the denominator omitted (in the instances cited, XV, XII: or 15, 12 "Lute fineness.") Transposing that fineness into the metric system, the figures XV (15), XII (12) are divided by 16.

**MADER, JOSEF.** (1754-1815). A German numismatist, the first student to critically evaluate coins of the middle ages. From 1779, he was a professor at the University of Prague. These works of his are especially important: Versuch ueber die Brakteaten (1797-1808), and Kritische Beitrage zur Muenzkunde des Mittelalters (1803-1815).

**MAINAI** Articles of Exchange. Any object, valuable, service available in exchange. In the dim past, and in the lives of primitive peoples even later, a mere exchange of one object or another into a desired similar or entirely separate item. In Lithuania, there were many classes of exchanges. Unconditional exchanges (exchange for an exchange), conditional (where an exchange could be returned if unsatisfactory), changeable (to be returned after a stated period). In the case of substantial exchanges, a "treat" would follow. With the advent of money as an intermediary, exchanges began to be simply buying and selling, and trade developed. Earlier, coins, and later all other monetary instruments began and continue to be exchangeable into any other types of valuables, wealth or service.

**MAJUSKULA** Capitals. (Latin, Majusculus). The large letters of the alphabet. In numismatics, all capital letters struck in a coin's legend, the inscription or its parts.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE...

**LOBIS** Hoard. (Greek thesauros, German, schatz). A. Money or valuables and in general similar articles, B. Fortune, wealth, a rare object of great value. C. A reserve of money accumulated and saved. D. Money, gold or other valuables hidden in the ground or some place else. In numismatics, an accidental finding or digging up of a large or small discovery of lost or hidden sum of money, coins, or valuables having historical value. Up until now, numismatic hoards in Lithuania have been found by the hundreds. Unfortunately, for obvious reasons, not all have been registered, and not all have been scientifically examined. Considerate finders will notify the proper authorities of any historical hoards discovered. Such authorities are (and always should be) prepared to purchase those hoards from the finders at a fair price, procure their scientific analysis, and to distribute articles worthy of exhibition to appropriate museums.



## COINS OF LITHUANIA

[From *Darbininkas*, August 4, 1995]

Coins were being minted in Lithuania already in the second half of the 14th century. The earliest surviving Lithuanian coins were minted when Lithuania was ruled by Algirdas (1345-1377). In the present territory of Lithuania, a mint operated in Vilnius from the 14th century to 1666. The coins of the Republic of Lithuania (1918-1940) were minted in 1925 at the Birmingham Mint in England [Editor's note: It was the King's Norton Metal Works]. Between 1936 and 1939 they were minted in Lithuania at the Kaunas Mint.

With the re-establishment of the Republic of Lithuania (March 11, 1990), the current mint was established on March 11, 1990. As of September 30, 1992, it mints coins for circulation, commemorative coins, high quality silver coins for collectors, silver, silver plated and brass enameled decorations. The Lithuanian Mint continues the production of the decorations of the Republic of Lithuania which were established 1918 to 1940. Following the patterns from museum pieces, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class decorations of the Order of Gediminas are also made here.

At the Lithuanian Mint, all of the work related to the development and production of the coins, decorations and pins is performed, including the drawings, models, mock-ups, die production, polishing of the planchets and blanks.

The presses used by the Lithuanian Mint were provided by two firms: Schuler, and HME. The counting machines and the tooling technology was provided by the firm EVD.



**ABOVE: Petras Garška, an artist of the Lithuanian Mint who creates Lithuanian coins and decorations. Photo by Victoras KAPOČIUS.**

## LET'S POUR CHAMPAGNE ON LITAS

7.

By Valė Čeplevičiūtė

[From *Respublika*, June 25, 1994]

TRANSLATED BY ALGIRDAS KEPALAS

The one year old litas (yesterday) was respectfully talked about in the Bank of Lithuania. Glasses of champagne to the litas were lifted by former presidents of the Bank of Lithuania: Bronius Povilaitis, Vilius Baldišis, Romualdas Visokavičius, and the present one, Kazys Ratkevičius. "Storms are raging, but the litas holds the ground pretty well," said the present master of the central bank.



**Two fathers of the litas, V. Baldišis and R. Visokavičius, chat pleasantly.**

Bronius Povilaitis, presently occupied in the financial politics department of the Bank of Lithuania, told vividly how much an optimist gained who put 1,000 litai into a bank a year ago and how much a pessimist lost who did not trust national currency and put away the same sum in dollars. After an estimate of interest norms and this period's inflation, we could applaud the litas. B. Povilaitis declared that pessimistic forecasts could prove to be true only if referendum's possible victory would bring a great breakthrough for inflation.

**Meanwhile, inflation does not particularly scare the bankers. Therefore 500 and 1,000 notes lie untouched in the vaults. They will only become needed when the two weeks' average salary will reach 500 litai.** We shouldn't mourn the sinking buying power of the litas. K. Ratkevičius proposed to compare how much we could buy for one dollar in America and how much for 4 litai in Lithuania. This comparison fits the celebration well. But we should notice the not very festive forecast that the inflation at the end of the year should reach 47.8%.

Vice-president of the Tauras Bank, Vilius Baldišis remembered all who stood at the cradle of national currency, but did not forget those who opposed it too. Among the adversaries was named the International Monetary Fund, whose assistance during the introduction of the litas soon with subliminal words praised R. Visokavičius who also thanked all former managers. But he could not pardon the litas credibility law.

R. Visokavičius who is creating an international bank now and who is the patron of the sum [monetary unit] of Uzbekistan, said that our litas is so strong that he does not need any currency direction. But glancing at V. Baldišis he sighed that "two heads already have been shot, that is why K. Ratkevičius is afraid to stick his out of the trenches." Nevertheless, it was forecast that "Currency direction anyway will wither." Here K. Ratkevičius could not endure anymore and objected that it will not be so because this one (currency direction) did not have time to sprout and to grow during these three months, and the Bank of Lithuania does not water it with something harmful. The Bank simply obeys the laws.

The celebration of the first anniversary of the litas was continued in the Stikliai restaurant where R. Visokavičius had ordered the dinner. The menu was guarded by the restaurant as strictly a state secret.



By Rūta Kuncienė

Translated by Algirdas Kepalas

[From VORUTA, #13, April 1-7 1993]



The question of the introduction of national currency was being raised already in 1919. In the meeting of the cabinet of ministers of August 12, it was decided to name the new monetary unit *muštinis*. During the same meeting questions of size, colors, watermarks and design were discussed. It was intended to issue paper notes in 9 denominations: 1, 2, 1, 5, 10, 25, 50, 100, 500, and 1,000 *muštinis*, which should be decorated with patterns of Lithuanian sashes, views of commerce and nature and in the watermark—the Vytis. The designs of money were to be prepared by artists Antanas Žmuidzinavičius and Adomas Galdikas. New notes were intended to be printed in Sweden.

Minister of Finance J. Vileišis planned to make the gold content backing of the *muštinis* equal to that of the French franc, i.e. 0.322 grams of pure gold. Half of the notes incirculation had to be covered by gold-based currency (it was expected to get a 10 million pound loan from England), the other half, by various valuables: bills of exchange, securities, etc. But it was not destined that these plans be realized, and introduction of a national currency was postponed for another three years.

On August 9, 1922, the Founding Seimas [Parliament] accepted the law of the Unit of Currency which announced the introduction of the litas currency based on gold. Realization of the new currency was handed over to the Bank of Lithuania, founded by law by action of the Seimas on August 11, 1922. The main task of the bank was to "regulate the turnover of money in Lithuania, to ease payments of money in this country and foreign countries, to realize a stable and durable money system in the Republic of Lithuania, and to stimulate growth of agriculture, industry and commerce."

The government granted the bank a 20 year commission to issue the notes and for their coverage, transferred 3 million gold rubles received from the Soviet Union according to the peace treaty of July 12, 1920. On October 1, 1922, the new monetary unit, the litas, was introduced. Its gold content was equal to 0.150462 grams of pure gold. The litas was equal to the U.S. dollar at a proportion of 10 to 1, or U.S. 10¢.

Until the appearance of permanent notes, ordered in the printing office of A. Haase in Prague, it was decided to issue temporary notes without delay. On August 30, the minister of Finance, V. Petrulis and director of the Otto Elsner printing shop, Fritz v. Lindenau, started negotiations about urgent printing of temporary notes. The following day the agreement was signed. The first shipment of temporary notes had to arrive in Eitkūnai [Note: A Lithuanian town at the German border] by September 27; the second, by September 30.

The Otto Elsner printing shop in Berlin printed German marks and Lithuanian money and had a supply of note drawings, ground ornaments, and watermarks. Therefore, it was only necessary to select desired designs, to

20, temporary notes were brought to Kaunas. The urgency of the order was a factor in the small size of the notes, and the plainness of the designs.

After the permanent notes had been issued, the process of taking the temporary ones out of circulation began. After October 15, 1924, the temporary notes of 5 litai value were exchanged only at the Bank of Lithuania in Kaunas.

The counterfeiting of temporary notes began, although they were only in circulation a short time. There are known forgeries of even four values of notes: 20 and 50 centas, as well as the 1 and 5 litas. Particularly often counterfeited were 5 litai notes with serial letters B and D.

## BLOOD MONEY

[From **Darbininkas**, August 4, 1995]

More and more people in Lithuania want to sell their blood. Generally it is those whose income is inadequate and who thereby want to supplement their income to purchase food or pay the rent. Payment for blood donations is made by the State Social Insurance Office "Sodra." In June, the price paid was 74 litai, in July it was 65.10 litai. According to the Kaunas blood donation center, 30 to 40 people donate blood daily. There are 5 times more people willing to donate blood than are actually accepted. Most of the donors, just as most of the unemployed, are women.

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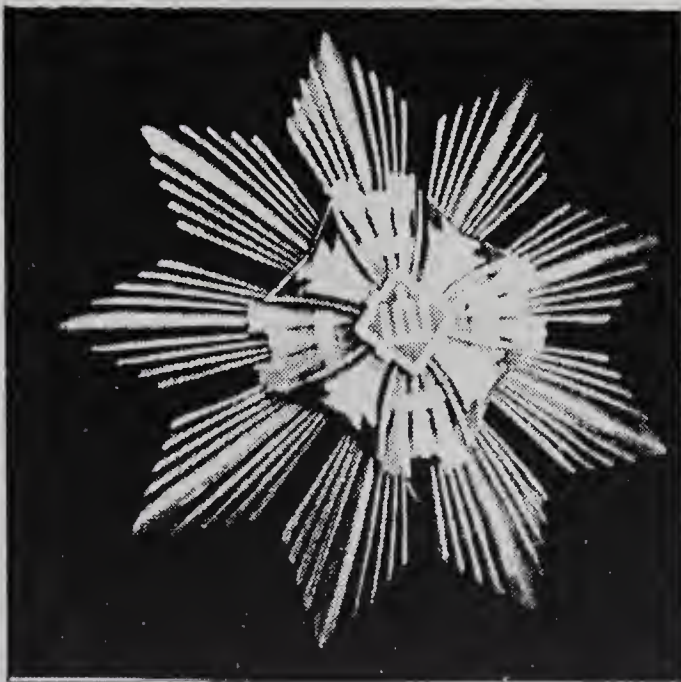


Currently, the highest Lithuanian State decoration is the Order of the Cross of Vytis, which was established in 1919. At that time it was called the Order of the Fatherland Cross. The Supreme Council in 1991 re-established the decorations sanctioned up to 1930. The highest decoration at that time was the Order of Vytautas the Great with a gold chain. It was not included in the list of decorations by neither the Supreme Council nor the Parliament. According to the law of the pre-war Republic of Lithuania, this decoration was given to the newly elected president. The Cross of Vytis decoration has been awarded to Tomas Sernas who suffered during the Medininkai tragedy.

From the beginning of his presidency, Algirdas Brazauskas has signed orders for presentation of 45 Cross of Vytis, and 120 Order of King Gediminas decorations. The Chairman of the Supreme Council, Vytautas Landsbergis, signed orders of the presentation of 64 Cross of Vytis, and 2,500 January 13 decorations.

Decorations of pre-war Lithuania were manufactured in France and Switzerland. Now they are manufactured at the Lithuanian Mint, the "Daile" and the "Medalis" firms. The ribbons are manufactured in Denmark. According to the President's Director for Decorations, their manufacture is three times cheaper than if it were done in Lithuania.

The Order of King Gediminas which were awarded basketball players Arvydas Sabonis and Sarūnas Marčiulionis cost about 2,000 litai (U.S. \$500). The decorations were made of silver and decorated with gold. The manufacturers think that in the coming year the costs will increase. They believe that the Order of King Gediminas with a star will cost about \$1,000.



**D.L.K. Gedimino ordinas**

**WANTED TO BUY:** Picture postcards of Lithuania & Memel, pre-1941 only. Also books and pamphlets on Lithuanian History (Only in English) pre-1940. J. R. Greene. 33 Bearsden Rd., Athol, MA 0331.

**RESEARCHING YOUR LITHUANIAN FAMILY HISTORY?** Write the Genealogical Department of the Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, 6500 S. Pulaski Road, Chicago, IL 60629, for further information. They have a vast research archives available.

**FOR SALE:** Municipal currency notes circa 1917-1923 from Klaipėda Territory and Lithuania Minor, such communities as: Šilutė (Heydekrug), Ragainė (Ragnit), Klaipėda, Tilžė (Tilsit), Rusnė (Russ) and Insterburg. Special collection for sale. Write for list and prices. Frank Passic, 900 S. Eaton St., Albion, MI 49224.

## ČIURLIONIS COIN, Con't from pg. 1.

The coins were struck in .925 silver, with a mintage of 10,000 pieces. Diameter: 34 mm. Weight: 23.3 grams. The designer of the coin was Antanas Žukauskas, who also designed the 1995 Fifth World Lithuanian Sports Games commemorative coin.

The coin features a bust of Čiurlionis facing right, with the legend, "1875-1911. M. K. Čiurlionis. The initials of the designer appear in small letters under the bust.

The other side of the coin features the modern-day Vytis emblem within a shield and date "1995" below. The top legend reads, "LIETUVA," with the bottom legend horizontally stating "50 LITU." On the left is found elements of some of Čiurlionis' creation, the "Strong White Wings" from his 1909 painting, "The Altar."

The edge of the coin is inscribed, "PASAULIS KAIP DIDELE SIMFONIA." meaning, "The World is a Great Symphony," reminding us of two of his famous works, "The Sea," and "In the Forest."

The coins were minted at the Lithuanian Mint, whose mintmark appears on the lower left of the large wings on the reverse.

Special thanks to Vytautas Aleksiejunas of the Bank of Lithuania for supplying us with this information.



## WANT/FOR SALE ADS

10.

**FOR SALE:** I am selling some of my library. Dr. Victor Zilaitis. 2018 Heathfield Circle, Sun City Center, Florida. 33573-7304. (813) 633-3403.

These books: **Virėja**. 1937. by K. Petrikenė. 224 pp. Lith cookbook. \$27. **Teesis...** 1990 by J. Kazlauskas. 200 pp. of photographs of Lithuanian paintings \$45. **Žmogusješko Tiesos**. by J. Ragauskas. 1972. 296 pp. very deep. \$22. **Lietuvos Meno Istorijos Bruožai**. 1960. by J. Jurginis. 492 pp.. \$44. **Pasakojimai Apie Draugus**. 1971. by P. Buknys. 66 pp. biographies. \$11.

**FREE !** As a Christmas gift to all our paid LNA members. we are enclosing a FREE 1991 50 centu coin with this issue of **The Knight**. We wish you a blessed Christmas season. and a happy New Year. These coins are courtesy of our director/translator Aleksandras Radžius and his relatives in Lithuania.

**FOR SALE:** Lithuanian refrigerator magnet! Colorful. makes great Christmas gift! Soft rubber. \$5.00

1995 10 Litu commemorative Lith. World Sports Games coin: Lithuanian numismatic books, coins and banknotes. Write for price list. Frank Passic, 900 S. Eaton St., Albion, MI 49224.



## LETTERS

I would like to present our LNA members with challenge: Have the members write "How I got started collecting Lithuanian coins/banknotes/medals, etc." I am sure that such an article/series would bring an interesting new perspective into our common interest.

Sincerely, Tyge Sondergaard, Nr. Alslev, DENNMARK.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Why didn't I think of that? I have been trying to think of something special for our 100th issue coming up at the end of Volume 18, and this is the perfect thing! OK members: Write us with a few paragraphs or so about how you got started, perhaps listing a few of the "special" items in your collection, and what you collect. Let's get a big response for our big 100th issue which will come out in May-June. ]

Dear Frank:

The designer of the 1995 10 Litu 5th World Lithuanian Sports Games commemorative coin is Mr. Gediminas Karalius (athlete side), and Mr. Petras Gintalas (Vytis side).

Also I would like to inform you that the designer of the 1995 5th anniversary commemorative silver 50 Litu coin is Mr. Antanas Žukauskas. The coins are minted at the Mint of Lithuania.

As regards the banknotes of 500 and 1,000 Litu denominations dated 1991, I would like to let you know that the Bank of Lithuania didn't put them in circulation yet. The Bank distributed our other banknotes. SPECIMENS [Pavyzdys] only through commercial Banks of Lithuania and to the central banks of foreign countries.

As regards myself, I am interested in the medieval/middle ages Lithuanian coins. I wrote some articles in this field in previous years. At this moment, as you know, about two years. I am working at the Bank of Lithuania, Cash department, Money production and technology division. I am the Bank's Numismatist.

Sincerely yours, Vytautas Aleksiejunas.  
Vilnius, Lithuania.



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